NATIONAL STATEMENT

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ON THE OCCASION OF MEETING OF THE STATE PARTIES TO THE
CONVENTION OF THE PROHIBITION OF THE DEVELOPMENT,
PRODUCTION AND STOCKPILING OF BACTERIOLOGICAL
(BIOLOGICAL) AND TOXIN WEAPONS AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION

Geneva, Switzerland
NOVEMBER 2021
Mr. Chairman,

First, let me congratulate you, on behalf of the Government of Jamaica, on your appointment as chairperson of the Meeting of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention. You can be assured of our support in your efforts to ensure the efficient management of this year’s session. Jamaica wishes to thank His Excellency Yann Hwang of France for his able leadership of the 2019 Meeting of States Parties.

We also commend the work of the Secretariat as well as State Parties in efforts taken since the Convention entered into force on March 26, 1975, to ensure that its work remains relevant and effective in the face of evolving global security threats. We are particularly heartened by the interest in, and deliberate steps taken by the Secretariat and the Implementing Support Unit in recent years to extend support to countries of the Caribbean Region to strengthen their capacity and capabilities.

Forty-six years after acceding to the Biological Weapons Convention, Jamaica remains resolute in our commitment to cooperating with the international community to address the problem of the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and to support intensified efforts to prohibit the development, production, acquisition, transfer, stockpiling and use of biological and toxin weapons.

This deep and unwavering resolve comes in the face of new and emerging biological threats including bio terrorism and the proliferation of biological weapons, which have been made possible through advances in science and biotechnology. Now more than ever, there is the urgent need to
strengthen biosafety and security and for greater levels of cooperation among states to reduce threat levels.

Jamaica, through national policy initiatives across several Ministries and agencies of government, recognizes the importance of biotechnology and biosafety. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, and the Ministry of Health and Wellness as the National Authority, are currently engaged in discussions towards consolidating our obligations under the BWC, CWC and related requirements of the UNSCR 1540 and Strategic Trade Control into a comprehensive legislation.

Jamaica has also engaged experts to undertake a comprehensive review of our biological and chemicals management framework in keeping with our obligations under Article IX of the Convention. We further continue to utilize the existing legal framework to ensure biosecurity through proposed amendments to the Pesticides Act and the Precursor Chemicals Act.

The commitment of the government of Jamaica to Biosafety is also evidenced by strong policy positions resulting in the creation of a National Chemical Emergency Risk Policy Plan and a draft National Bio-Safety Policy. This policy will be implemented in conjunction with the draft National Biotechnology Strategy and Biotechnology Policy.

Mr. Chairman,

Jamaica extends special commendations to agencies such as the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and other partners including the European Union and the United Kingdom, for their continued funding support to the BWC Assistance Project for the Caribbean, and Extended Assistance Programme pursuant to EU Council Decision
2019/97. Jamaica is keen on building synergies both at the regional and international level to strengthen institutional and technical capacities.

Jamaica is also playing its part, including to implement obligations pursuant to Article X, by hosting and participating in workshops on developing a legal/regulatory basis for United Nations Sanctions Enforcement which was aimed at raising awareness among CARICOM member states on UN sanctions designed to prevent trade in chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials and technology as well as assist participants with developing legislation to enforce sanctions and other strategic trade controls.

The current Covid-19 global health crisis and its accompanying devastation to the lives and livelihood of individuals and countries should serve as the basis for which states parties reaffirm their commitments under this Convention and accelerate efforts towards complete biological weapons disarmament even as we are seized of the importance and urgency of eliminating bacteriological arsenals and take strong, decisive and effective steps towards achieving the goals of the Convention for the safety, health and peace of all.

Jamaica therefore joins the call for the BWC at its periodic review conferences to review new developments to include potential pandemic pathogens.

Thank you, Chairman.